Crop Conditions as of August 13, 2009

Hail destroyed substantial acres of cropland in the August long weekend storms that left a path of destruction across Alberta. Since the storms, weather in the past two weeks saw a return to cooler, below normal temperatures and scattered showers. Crop development still lags two to four weeks behind normal. Frost is the number one reported concern across the province because of the lateness of the crops due to the cold dry spring. A frost-free fall is critical at this stage to allow the late and uneven crops to mature. Early frost is the biggest threat to reasonable crop quality in an already very challenging growing season.

Despite the recent rainfall, lack of moisture remains a concern for filling crops, hay growth and pasture conditions, particularly at the sub-surface level. Table 2 provides estimates of sub-surface moisture conditions. Provincially, surface moisture is rated as 38 per cent poor, 32 per cent fair, 23 per cent good and seven per cent excellent.

Harvest has just begun, mainly for winter cereals and dry peas in the Southern, Central and North East Regions. Harvesting difficulties are expected with the flushes of late germinating crops and weeds from recent rains. Uneven crop growth within the same field is reported for crops across the province. Provincial yield estimates are below to well below the five year average, which remains relatively unchanged from the previous crop report. Shown in Table 1 below are the estimates of crop conditions reported for Alberta.

First cut dryland haying is 90 per cent complete. Yields are poor, with quality reported at 18 per cent poor, 34 per cent fair, 34 per cent good and 14 per cent excellent. Prospects of a second dryland cut are reduced because of slow growth and recent rains have negatively affected quality. Second cut irrigated hay is 31 per cent complete, with quality ranging between fair to good. Pasture ratings have improved to 55 per cent poor, 35 per cent fair and ten per cent good.

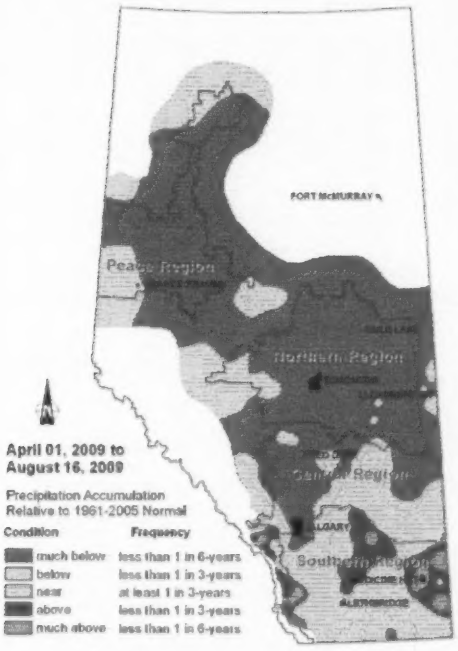

Table 1: Estimates of Crop Conditions, Alberta

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total*
Spring Wheat	33%	45%	21%	1%	100%
Durum Wheat	32%	39%	26%	3%	100%
Oats	30%	46%	22%	1%	100%
Barley	32%	45%	22%	2%	100%
Canola	36%	42%	20%	2%	100%
Dry Peas	34%	46%	19%	1%	100%

Source: Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

Table 2: Estimates of Sub-Surface Moisture Conditions, Alberta

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total*
South	12%	22%	43%	23%	100%
Central	45%	31%	21%	3%	100%
North East	75%	23%	2%	0%	100%
North West	79%	21%	0%	0%	100%
Peace	77%	21%	2%	0%	100%
Alberta	57%	24%	14%	5%	100%

Source: Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

* Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Our thanks to Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen, staff of AFSC and the Alberta Ag-Info Centre for their partnership and contribution to the Alberta Crop Reporting Program

REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS:

The 2009 Alberta Crop Report Series continues to provide summaries for the following five regions:

Region One: Southern (Strathmore, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Foremost)

- All areas of the region reported good rainfall during the last two weeks, improving sub-surface moisture ratings to 12 per cent poor, 22 per cent fair, 43 per cent good and 23 per cent excellent. Conditions are excellent for fall seeded crops and pastures are showing improvement.
- Unfortunately, the August 3 hailstorm devastated substantial acres of maturing crops in the M.D. of Taber and Vulcan and Wheatland counties. Second cut irrigated hay is about 33 per cent complete, but quality is a concern as turned swaths are reported black from recent rains.
- Crop condition ratings and yield estimates remain unchanged from the last report.
- Harvest has begun in winter cereals and dry peas, with 13 and 16 per cent combined respectively. Canola swathing is beginning to start.

Region Two: Central (Rimbey, Airdrie, Coronation, Oyen)

- General rain showers are helping crop development and filling. Sub-surface moisture ratings are 45 per cent poor, 31 per cent fair, 21 per cent good and three per cent excellent. More rain is needed to improve conditions to allow for seeding of fall crops and late grazing.
- The August 3 hailstorm caused significant crop damage in the M.D. of Rocky View and the counties of Ponoka, Lacombe and Red Deer.
- Crop condition ratings are relatively unchanged. Yields are expected to be well below average because of the cold dry spring and heat stress in July.
- Combining of fall-seeded crops (five per cent) and dry peas (three per cent) has begun.

Region Three: North East (Smoky Lake, Vermilion, Camrose, Provost)

- Overall, the region received very little moisture in the last two weeks. Sub-surface moisture is rated at 75 per cent poor, 23 per cent fair and two per cent good.
- Crop condition ratings have declined slightly, spring wheat and barley are at 35 per cent poor, 52 per cent fair and 13 per cent good. Canola is rated at 46 per cent poor, 47 per cent fair and seven per cent good, and peas are at 37 per cent poor, 53 per cent fair and ten per cent good. Depending on the location within the region, some crops are starting to deteriorate due to the hot, dry weather and grasshopper infestations.
- First cut dryland hay is rated at 85 per cent complete, with quality ranging from 49 per cent fair to 47 per cent good. Pasture conditions are deteriorating, with 70 per cent rated as poor.
- Harvest progress for winter cereal crops is at 15 per cent combined.

Region Four: North West (Barrhead, Edmonton, Leduc, Drayton Valley, Athabasca)

- Small scattered showers reported throughout the region. Sub-surface moisture is rated at 79 per cent poor and 21 per cent fair.
- Cereal crop condition ratings declined slightly since the last report, with spring wheat and barley rated at 52 per cent poor, 42 per cent fair and six per cent good. Grain yield estimates for crops not salvaged for feed are expected to be well below average.
- First cut dryland hay is rated at 94 per cent complete, with quality rated at 29 per cent poor, 39 per cent fair to 32 per cent good. Pasture conditions are rated at 62 per cent poor, 37 per cent fair and one per cent good.
- Grasshopper damage in forages and crops is severe in areas throughout the region; counts are 33 per cent over threshold.

Region Five: Peace River (Fairview, Falher, Grande Prairie, Valleyview)

- Scattered showers throughout the region brought variable amounts of precipitation. Sub-surface moisture was rated at 77 per cent poor, 21 per cent fair and two per cent good.
- Crop condition ratings have improved slightly since the last crop report with a small decline in crops being rated as poor. Crops need heat and frost-free days to finish maturing.
- First cut dryland hay is rated at 94 per cent complete, with quality rated at eight per cent poor, 13 per cent fair, 35 per cent good and 44 per cent excellent. Pasture regrowth has been slow and conditions are rated as 58 per cent poor, 31 per cent fair and 11 per cent good.
- Grasshopper populations are increasing, but extensive damage has been limited to small areas.

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
Economics and Competitiveness Division
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